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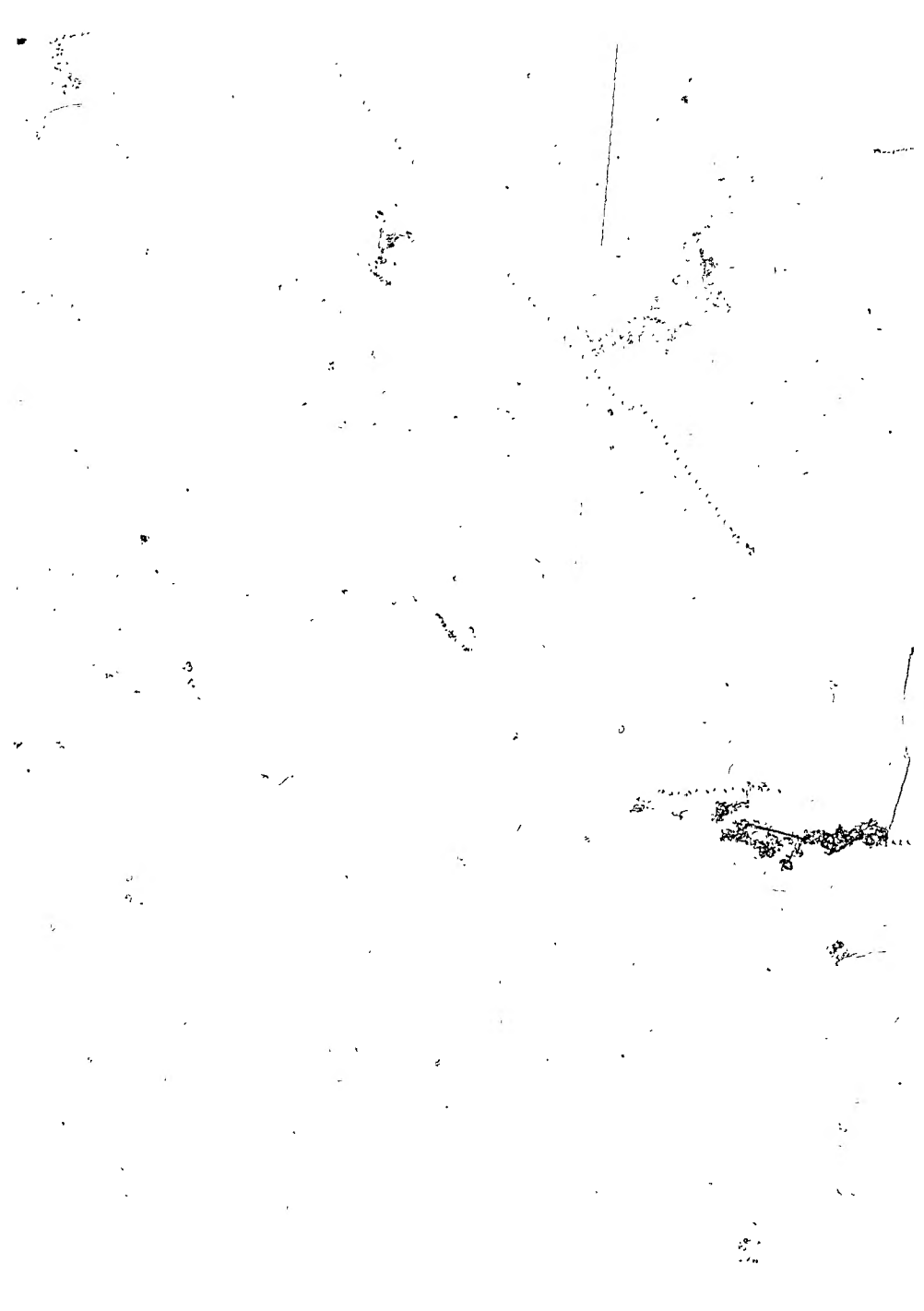
Little Marie,

or

"Marked for God."

**A True
Tale of
Work in
Athabasca.**

Bruce Keel
April 15, 1966



LITTLE MARIE.

OR

"MARKED FOR GOD."

A TRUE TALE OF WORK IN ATHABASCA

BY MRS. YOUNG.

"And why did you not bring Marie back," was the question put to Gèneve, my Indian girl, whom I had sent to fetch the child from her parent's tent. "They would not let her come to school again" was the reply.

It was a lovely Sunday evening, we had finished our happy Sunday School, and everything seemed to be running smoothly. But, unknown to me, one of the little boys had been playing with a willow and, accidentally, hit Marie very slightly. The parents being told, they kept the child back.

About three months before this happened, an Indian woman, named Caroline, after being at the church service, came to the Mission with her two little ones, Marie and Margaret. As usual

she had dinner, and received some simple lesson suited to her, before she left to go to her tent.

She was one whom we believed to be a humble follower of Jesus. After a while I left her, and entered into another room. I soon heard little feet running after me, and saw Marie's dear bright face looking up into mine, as she climbed on my knee, and said, "Ne pa itootan schoohk wapuke" (I come to school to-morrow). After consideration, and ascertaining from Caroline that it was her and her husband's wish, we consented to take her. Little Marie, who had been baptized as an infant at Vermilion, was small, now about six years of age, had a dear round face, dark eyes, and scanty, black hair. The parents brought her two days after, and we took her and treated her as our own child—we all loved her, for it was surely God who had entrusted her to us, and put it into her little heart to wish to come. She went to our Mission school regularly, and soon learned a little English. She sang sweetly in Cree, for her age, and also in English as time went on. The change that had come over her life and surroundings seemed just what she needed. As I think of her being brought into a home, where the love of Jesus was being taught—

prayer offered up, and God's praise sung—I can remember the privilege that I felt it to be, when I put her to bed and taught her a little prayer. Yes! we all loved Marie.

Now! do you wonder that the question I put to Gèneve, on that lovely Summer's evening, was in a troubled, almost nervous tone? The Bishop, and the Missionary in charge of that station were away. What could I do? It was very late at night, but light still. I started out and went along the bank of the river until I reached the tent. Loud talking was going on inside. I spoke, and a rough answer was given, so unlike the usual courtesy of the Indian. My feeble effort to explain what had happened, unknown to me, was in vain. The father still rudely answered that 'the child should not come back.' I retraced my steps, sad at heart. I felt hurt and disappointed. Gloom seemed to settle over everything. My little Marie's bed empty! It was a sad night for me. Morning came—a busy day of work opened for me. I was told that Marie had been taken out visiting all day and was tired and looking poorly. I sent back her clothes, and a bottle of Birch Syrup which had been given to her. I wished to show the parents that neither

my own little girl nor the other children should reap any benefit from Marie's belongings. Monday passed—Tuesday, when at morning prayers I was playing the organ and we were singing, I heard some one come in very gently. I continued—we read and prayed, when we rose from our knees, I saw Caroline on her knees, sighing. I drew close to her. With tears on her cheeks, she told me she was so sorry for what they had done, and asked me if I would take her child back into the school. I demurred, telling her that if she and her husband did not trust our care, they, being the child's parents, could keep her. We would not press them to give her to us. She wept, telling me she feared God would be angry with them, for it was Marie's own wish to be placed with us—she wanted to learn about God and Heaven. All this, said in Cree again and again, was very touching. In fact she intimated, as well as she could make me understand, that Marie seemed different to their other children. Evidently she thought she was "marked for God" (as Indians express it). Finally I consented and promised to send Gènevè for her.

Marie was so happy to get back to us, and as weeks rolled on, her parents came in from their

2 hunting grounds and visited her, instead of crying which is the custom of other Indian children, she was merry, amusing them with much of her child-like prattle, so that they could only be thankful that she was under our care and instruction. Her attachment to the Bishop was marked, she would run away from the other children, when at play, and walk up and down with him. I have seen her climb on his knee and there fall asleep while he was telling stories to the others. Her knowledge of English progressed, but she was liable to make mistakes at times. Our school teacher taught church singing and chanting very nicely. Marie took her part of course. Christmas was near and the name of Santa Claus was often spoken by the children. Marie was put to bed before the older ones, and used to amuse herself by singing all the pieces she knew. One of the girl's asked me if I knew what Marie was singing. She said she overheard her chanting the Kyrie Eleison and saying, instead of "to keep this law," "cline our hearts to Santa Claus!" We smile, but can we wonder? Think what a feeble grasp the native must have of English for some-time, and it is especially the case with a child.

Month's rolled on; she grew strong, we hoped

and believed; she learnt well, and seemed to take in the story of Jesus' love. I shall never forget the day, one Saturday as winter was setting in, the mother begged to have Marie at her tent for a few hours. She was making her a bright colored dress for New Year's day. I allowed her to go. She was brought back towards evening. I can see her running to tell the Bishop how she had enjoyed herself, and "eaten rabbit." She became poorly that very night—could not eat. I consider she had received her death blow that day. The draughts in an Indian tent, coarse food, and probable chill taken, brought on sickness, and, after some weeks of care and nursing, we had to face the fact that consumption had set in.

We believe she loved and knew Jesus as her Saviour. The well-known hymn "Jesus Loves Me," we constantly sang to her, and she would join in, apparently comforted and assured. The mother did not wish to take her to her tent, and used to come and spend each afternoon with her child. On one occasion, (when evening was coming on, I carried Marie up to my bedroom) asking Caroline to come up, and see where she slept, the poor mother sighed and by way of

expressing the comfort of the room said, "It is just like summer here." Marie was taken Home February 17th, and, the end coming early, her father and mother had not been fetched. They came in about 10 o'clock. Their submission was very marked. They expressed no doubts as to our care of her. They said she seemed to them "marked for God." She had given herself to us for instruction, etc. This and much that an Indian feels was spoken in gentle, respectful language. As many wished to see her peaceful little form ere we committed her to the grave, we prepared a room and placed on a table close to the body, the Bible from which the Bishop spoke and taught those who came in. We also sang hymns which she had so loved and sung.

Surely, the tending of this little one had been a great privilege ! We shall look for little Marie in the bright, and joyous resurrection morn.

This, and many similar cases in different Missions, will convey to the reader some idea of the deep interest it is possible to take in the natives, the "love of Christ constraining us" to spend and be spent for His sake. There are many pure joys granted to the workers that others know not of.

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